

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

March 16, 2009

Mayor Wright called the meeting to order at 7:59 PM in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present

Councilor Banach
Councilor Boni
Councilor Bottalico
Councilor Bowen
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Lenares
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright

Staff Present

Town Manager Salomone
Lori Verreault, Executive Assistant
Ann Harter, Finance Director
Dr. Perlini – Superintendent of Schools
Lou Jachimowicz, Business Manager

Board of Education Members Present

Daniel Carson, Chair
Beth DelBuono, Vice Chair
Mary Niro, Secretary
Stephen Woods
Marc Finkelstein
Pamela Raynock
Sharon Braverman
Nancy Petronio
Meg Casasanta

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL (none)

IV CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A Budget Review – Board of Education

Mr. Carson, Board of Education Chair, presented the Board's proposed 2009-2010 budget. (Complete presentation attached.)

Discussion

Mayor Wright inquired what would happen if the Board submitted a budget of less than a three-percent increase. Mr. Carson replied that doing so would be painful and would not move education forward in the Town. He stated that the Board recognizes what the Town can afford and has shown a bipartisan effort to meet these needs. Mayor Wright inquired whether the consensus of the Board is that the three-percent budget is a good budget. Mr. Carson replied that the three-percent budget works. Mayor Wright

noted prior comments that the a three-percent budget would be “devastating” and asked if the Board no longer feels that such a budget would be devastating due to changes by AFSCME. Mr. Carson stated that the Board has picked up some savings due to health benefits and AFSCME changes. Mr. Woods stated that the Board has picked up ½% savings in health insurance. Mr. Carson stated that in order to achieve this proposed budget there have been a whole series of painful cuts to items that could have advanced the curriculum. Mayor Wright inquired about how upcoming federal money will affect this budget. Dr. Perlini stated that there will be a meeting with the Commissioner of Education on March 17 to review how to apply for federal funding.

Councilor Bottalico inquired whether the health benefits costs are an estimated cost. Mr. Carson replied that the cost is estimated but stated that benefits are set by the Agent of Record. Councilor Bottalico thanked AFSCME for voting on a zero-percent increase and inquired about the Board’s administrative increases for the upcoming year. Mr. Carson replied that the increases are less than the cost of living. Councilor Bottalico indicated that there will be no pay increases on the Town’s side this year and inquired whether the Board is looking to do the same. Mr. Carson replied in the negative and stated that he believes that the Board should reward performance. He stated that the Town achieves results well above State averages across the board. Councilor Bottalico stated that he does not feel that salary increases are helping the children. Mr. Carson stated that he does not believe that throwing money at education helps education but stated that this group of individuals should not be penalized for going above and beyond and giving a superior performance. Councilor Bottalico stated that it is time to take a good hard look at this, and inquired whether there has been any discussion about approaching the teachers to reopen their contracts. Mr. Carson stated that he is not aware of a single school-district in the State that has been successfully able to convince teachers to open their contracts. He indicated that the Board has made overtures at the request of the Mayor but has not received a favorable response. He stated that if the Council will grant the Board a three-percent increase he will make a request for the union to reopen the contract but he cannot guarantee that the teachers will agree to do so. Councilor Bottalico stated that he wants to avoid teacher layoffs. He noted that one union has already made a concession.

Councilor Bottalico noted that there are other towns that are going to have layoffs. Mayor Wright inquired about the amount of the non-certified administrators’ pay increases. Mr. Carson replied that the increases will be 2.65%. Mayor Wright noted that on the Town’s side the decision for pay raises for department heads and the Town Manager is made by the Town Council, and he noted that the Town’s department heads have agreed to forgo pay raises this year. He inquired whether the Board of Education’s administrators would be willing to consider the same. Mr. Carson replied that the Board, by State statutes, is not involved in the day-to-day running of the school system. Mayor Wright stated that the Council is trying to understand the Board’s needs.

Councilor Boni noted that last year’s budget was \$55,872,142 and stated that a 3.71% increase should bring the budget to \$57,944,998, not \$57,942,552 as requested. He inquired about the line item under code 2310 for \$129,200. Deputy Mayor Lenares replied that the line item is for the SRO, and noted that there was a grant funding to pay for that line item in the past. Dr. Finkelstein replied that there had been a grant for the SRO in the past but it ended three or four years ago. He stated that about \$70,000 of the line item is for the SRO. Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired whether the Board shares the cost of the SRO with the Police Department. Dr. Finkelstein replied that the cost is shared 50% with the Police Department. Mayor Wright inquired about the \$3900 line item. Dr. Finkelstein replied that it is the salary of the Board’s Secretary.

Councilor Boni remarked that he was surprised to learn that salaries make up 97-98% of program costs. Dr. Finkelstein countered that salaries actually make up about 82% of program costs. He indicated that some programs have more materials needed, and some do not, which makes those programs more salary-heavy. Councilor Boni stated that for the top twelve programs, including art, career/computer education, health, math, music and physical education among others the total salaries are \$22,762,772 and the program costs are \$23,365,118, or 97% of the cost for those programs. Dr. Finkelstein replied that those are individual programs, and stated that certain departments, such as the computer departments, need more supplies, equipment or materials than other departments but stated that the overall percentage is at 82% for salary and benefits. Mr. Woods stated that the 82/18 ratio is exactly in line with the State average.

Councilor Boni inquired whether it a study has been done to determine if it would be more efficient and cost effective to contract out school bus services. Mr. Woods replied that a review was performed of the entire department and it was determined that it would cost an additional \$150,000 per year to contract bus services as opposed to providing in-house bus services. He indicated that this additional cost would not include bussing for the Parks and Recreations Department, St. Mary's School and special education bussing needs. Councilor Boni inquired when the study was performed. Dr. Finkelstein replied that the Board's Business Manager performed an in-depth study within the last year or two of the district versus surrounding towns, and the numbers indicated that the Town's transportation costs compare favorably with other area town's costs. Councilor Boni requested a copy of the study. Mayor Wright stated that the Town has offered to hire a third-party consultant to perform a study. He remarked that Newington is an anomaly - one of only 6-8 communities in Connecticut that runs its own school transportation services. Dr. Finkelstien recommended that the Board present its statistics and discuss with the Council whether the statistics are valid and if the Council does not believe that the statistics are valid it can then hire the third party consultant to perform the study. He stated, however, that it is the Council's prevue to hire a consultant if it wishes and even if the Town does hire a consultant it won't change the upcoming year's budget. Mayor Wright replied that the consultant can complete the study in less than one month. He stated that during this economy it is important to look at the many areas of duplication throughout the Town. Mr. Woods replied that the Board will always entertain anything it can do to save the Town money. He stated that the Board believes that contracting out bus services will not be a savings to the Town and will provide an inferior product in comparison to the in-house system. Mayor Wright asked how an outside bus service would provide inferior service. Mr. Woods replied that with an in-house service Dr. Perlini is able to dismiss schools early at any time for any reason if necessary, and with an outside bus company early dismissals would have to occur within a window of time, since the same busses serve multiple towns. Mayor Wright stated that the Town is willing to pay for the study. Mr. Carson stated that the Board is not objectively opposed to the study, but cautioned that the community may be opposed to hiring an outside service.

Councilor Boni stated that combining the Town and Board's building maintenance would save money and remarked that the Board should concentrate on academics and should not have to worry about maintenance. Councilor Boni noted that Dr. Perlini has retired as Superintendent of Schools but is continuing to work as Interim Superintendent until the position is filled. He stated that people have asked him to find out whether one of the Assistant Superintendents is capable of serving as the Interim Superintendent position. Mr. Carson replied that while both Assistant Superintendents are capable the Board feels comfortable having its seventeen-year leader, Dr. Perlini; see the Board through the budget process during these tough economic times. Mayor Wright inquired whether there were two Assistant Superintendents at the time when Dr. Perlini served as Assistant Superintendent. Dr. Perlini replied in the affirmative. Mayor Wright inquired whether the previous Superintendent, Dr. Ward, served as an interim Superintendent upon his retirement. Dr. Perlini replied in the affirmative.

Councilor Bowen stated that the Council took great pleasure in the fact that the Town's administrative staff has sacrificed pay increases in order to help with the Town's budget. He noted Councilor Boni's questions about salaries accounting for 97% of program costs and stated that costs such as heat and electricity are not allocated into these program costs. Councilor Bowen inquired whether the four eliminated teaching positions are actual layoffs or elimination of non-filled positions. Mr. Carson replied that the positions are currently vacant. Councilor Bowen stated that he had been told that laying off one teacher does not create a savings of one full teacher's salary and benefits, and requested an explanation of the concept. Mr. Woods replied that the Board of Education does not pay into the unemployment compensation fund; therefore the Board is responsible for paying for unemployment. Councilor Bowen inquired how many positions would need to be eliminated to save the equivalnt of one teacher's salary. Mr. Woods replied that two teachers would have to be laid off in order to save one salary. Councilor Bowen commented that in 2000-2001 the Town was raked about 110-119 in the State in per-student spending. Councilor Bowen requested to receive an email of the presentation. Councilor Banach requested that the presentation be posted online.

Councilor Nagel inquired whether teachers eligible for step increases would receive more than their contractual increases. Mrs. DelBuono replied that not every teacher receives a step raise each year; it depends on the contract and the teacher's years of service. Councilor Nagel noted that many of the Town's teachers have stayed in the Town for many years, and therefore these teachers are justifiably getting more of an increase. Mrs. DelBuono stated that there is a sixteen-step salary scale, of which 143

staff members are at the sixteenth step. She stated that this speaks well to the district that even though the teachers are getting a higher salary they are providing years of veteran experience and give their very best to the students and to the Town. Councilor Nagel requested to receive the results of the American Reinvestment Act meeting when it becomes available. He inquired about what steps the Board has taken outside the classroom to reduce costs, citing food services as an example. Mrs. Casasanta replied that the Board's food services are self-supporting. Mr. Carson added that food services are so efficient that not a penny of increase costs was passed on to the students this year. Mr. Woods stated that the Board's Business Manager Lou Jachimowicz has saved the Board hundreds or thousands of dollars in fuel, heating oil, gasoline and electricity costs by purchasing in advance. He stated that Mr. Jachimowicz is constantly searching for ways to save money.

Councilor Nagel noted that students pay at least \$55.00 to participate in school sports and inquired whether these fees are included in the Board's budget. Dr. Perlini replied that the fees are collected and deposited into an account; the account is drawn on to pay officials' fees and supplies for athletics. He stated that the Board is looking at fees charged by other area communities and the impact of raising these fees. Councilor Nagel inquired what happens to unexpended funding for items such as substitute teachers. Dr. Perlini replied that the Board reviews spending in all of its accounts towards the end of the school year, identifies programs with surpluses and programs with shortages and moves funding accordingly. Councilor Nagel inquired about requests for equipment purchase, such as printers and computers, and inquired why those purchases have been requested for this budget. Mr. Carson replied that as budgets have tightened in the past years the Board has fallen behind the curve in replacing certain equipment such as computers and printers. He stated that the proposed budget will only cover about one-third of what needs to be replaced and stated that the schools are now dealing with outdated equipment and software. He stated that the Board makes sure when purchasing new equipment that it is the most durable and efficient equipment available and that the purchases will advance the school system forward.

Councilor Cohen noted that the Council used to get a monthly or quarterly report from the Board, detailing appropriations encumbered and expended. Dr. Perlini indicated that the report was available quarterly. Mr. Carson stated that the reports can be issued going forward.

Mayor Wright requested an explanation of the health benefits fund. Mr. Woods explained that it is a fund that the Town and Board entered into about fifteen years ago and is for health benefits for all AFSCME and certified employees. He stated that the Town has a self-insured insurance program, and it pays only the administrative fee for claims up to \$150,000. Mayor Wright inquired about the logistics of how the fund operates. Mr. Woods replied that the fund is operated and regulated by an Agent of Record and there is an agreement between the Town and Board about the funding. He stated that the funding amount is reflected in the Board's budget. Mayor Wright stated that he didn't quite understand the logic behind the idea that the Town covers any shortfall in the Board of Education's premiums, but the Board keeps any surplus in the premiums. Mayor Wright stated that the surplus was about \$645,000 last year and noted that the Council increased the Board's budget by about \$2.3 million dollars last year. He remarked that he is unsure of whether he sees equality in the agreement between the Board and the Town and noted that if the Board had kept the \$645,000 surplus in its reserves the Board's requested 2009-2010 budget increase would be reduced from 3.00% to 1.80%. He inquired whether the agreement can be changed to keep any surpluses in reserve for the upcoming year's budget. Mr. Woods replied that there are many complexities in the agreement and noted that the Town is required to fund the program at the Agent of Record's level. He noted that prior to this agreement the Town absorbed any surplus into its general fund. Mr. Woods explained that under this agreement the surplus is used to cover a one-time expense, such as text books, and is used to cover a portion of the difference between the Board's budget request and what it actually receives. He remarked that the program has worked out well over the years and stated that the program has only been under-funded once since the start of the program. Dr. Finkelstein stated that the Board is obligated to fund the program at a certain level based on actuarial studies, and also noted that the Board does not always spend the entire surplus amount. Mayor Wright suggested a change to the agreement which would allow any surplus funds to stay in reserve for future insurance premiums. Mr. Woods stated that the Board has honored the agreement and has shown no desire to reopen the agreement at this point. Mayor Wright inquired whether the Board would be willing to do so at this point and again indicated that had the surplus been applied to the 2009-2010 proposed budget the increase would have been only 1.80%. Mr. Woods replied that the 1.80% would only be what was appropriated, but if the Town funded the Board's full request it would be much easier for the Board to

meet its budget. He stated that while the Board can live within the means of the requested budget its needs are not entirely met by this budget. Mayor Wright stated that the Town increased education spending by \$2.3 million dollars last year and stated that there was a golden opportunity with the extra \$645,000 to fund insurance premiums. He while the Town and the Board follow the agreement as written he questions the equality of the agreement. He stated that it is a great deal for the Board, since the Town pays any shortfalls but the Board gets to keep any surpluses. Mr. Woods indicated that the Council ultimately sets the Board's budget. Councilor Cohen stated that the agreement goes back to 1996 and was a very long, drawn out and complex process. She stated that the Town does not have enough employees on its staff to be able to support self-insurance; therefore the Town needs the Board's staff to be able to support the program. She stated that the Board, at the time, agreed to take part in the program only if the program met the Board's terms. Dr. Perlini explained that the agreement came about in a very tight budget year and the Board determined that it would fund the insurance less than what was being recommended. He stated that there had been a surplus nine of the ten previous years and the surplus was at the time put into a special account by the Town to be used by the Town for any purpose, and the Board, at the time, believed that such an arrangement wasn't right, therefore after long discussions, it was agreed that the Town would pay any deficit and any surplus would go to the Board. He stated that this agreement is based on law and based on State statutes. Dr. Perlini stated that the surplus of \$645,000 was cut out during last year's budget negotiations with the Town Council and stated that the Board earmarked the funds to purchase technology, textbooks and other non-salary items so that these items do not need to be included in the current budget, therefore saving the taxpayers' money on these items. Mayor Wright indicated that in 2008-2009 the Council only funded the Board for \$400,000 less than it had requested. Dr. Perlini replied that the budget had been cut from his proposed amount to the Board's proposed amount to the Council's approved amount. Mrs. Raynock inquired why the Council would not want the Board to benefit from the surplus funds. She remarked that the Board is present, aside from political affiliations, to present what it feels is an economically responsible albeit bare-bones budget. She stated that technology is used every day and remarked that children need to be taught to their future. She remarked that she doesn't understand the message, doesn't understand the questions that are being asked, and stated that they the discussion should be about the children and about the future. She stated that the \$166,000 homeowner will see an increase of \$137 in their taxes next year, and stated that as a taxpayer with a declining income she is willing to pay an extra \$137 to move our education system forward, not backward. She noted that the Board painstakingly worked and reworked the budget. She stated that education has been a cornerstone of the Town for years and stated that it needs to keep moving forward. Mrs. Raynock stated that salaries and costs increase and remarked that education cannot keep moving forward if the budget keeps getting cut. She remarked that she understands that it is a difficult economic time, and noted that this is the lowest budget that Dr. Perlini has ever presented in his tenure as Superintendent. Mayor Wright replied that he is also a product of the Newington School system but stated that as Mayor he has a fiduciary responsibility to scrutinize the budget. He stated that it is not fair to imply that the Council doesn't care about education just because it is looking at these budget items.

Councilor Bottalico inquired about the \$150,000 cost of the SRO's salary and benefits. Mr. Carson replied that the cost is actually \$110,000 and is shared between the Board and the Town. He stated that the SRO has been a wonderful addition to the High School and noted that there had been some debate about whether or not to add SROs to the middle schools as well. Councilor Bottalico agreed that the High School SRO does an excellent job. Councilor Bottalico noted that Rocky Hill's school bus contract costs the town \$750,000 per year, a figure he obtained from the Rocky Hill Board of Education. He also inquired why NHS has been contracting Dattco busses for sporting events. Dr. Perlini replied that in instances of high demand for busses, such as when there are six or seven events scheduled for one evening, the Board would have to contract out for busses. Councilor Bottalico inquired where the money for the contracted buses comes from. Dr. Perlini replied that it comes out of the Board's transportation budget. Councilor Bottalico inquired whether there is a program that gives teachers who give a three-year notice of retirement a \$10,000 bonus. Dr. Perlini replied that it depends on the teacher's number of years of service and stated that the contract calls for a five-percent increase in salary for the last three years if a teacher with at least fifteen-years of service gives at least three years' notice. He stated that this benefit was negotiated to take the place of unused sick leave payouts for teachers who leave the district.

Mayor Wright inquired how to address the situation of receiving less in State education funding, for example, how the Board would address a decrease of \$1,000,000 in State funding. Dr. Perlini replied that in such a situation he would recommend that the CIP Committee revisit its list of items and make up

for the shortfall out of CIP projects. Mr. Carson remarked that this conversation begs the question of whether it is too early for the Town to discuss budgets, considering how late the State acts on its own budget. Councilor Bowen stated that there are times when the Town completes its budget prior to receiving the ECS number and remarked that in years when the ECS came in higher he cannot recall a time when the Town has added that excess to the Board's budget. He stated that the Council is supposed to determine what is a fair funding for the Board's budget regardless of ECS funding. He suggested that the Council and Board sit down together after the budget process is complete to see if there is any potential for future savings through reorganization.

Mayor Wright inquired what would happen if the Board was funded for the same amount as it was last year, as is being proposed in West Hartford and other towns. Mr. Carson replied that although he cannot say specifically what would happen there would be massive cuts. Mayor Wright stated that even with a zero increase the Board would have \$55 million to work with. Mr. Carson referred to the Board's budget presentation, and stated that cutting further could result in loss of programs such as athletics, music, all-day kindergarten, bussing etc. Mayor Wright noted that salary increases, including step increases, amount to about \$1.5 million dollars. Dr. Perlini indicated that the increases amount to about \$1.2 million. Mayor Wright noted that according to the data provided to him the increases are about \$670,000 for certified teachers, \$600,000 in step increases, \$50,000 for admin and \$150,000 for (not audible). Councilor Bottalico inquired why the step increases are almost as much as the regular increases. Dr. Finkelstien replied that step increases are set according to negotiated agreements, and noted that teachers pay more for health benefits than AFSCME employees do. He noted that negotiations are held every four years and stated that these negotiated items are in line with the rest of the State. Councilor Bottalico inquired about the raise percentages including steps. Dr. Finkelstein replied that the average increase including steps is four-percent. Mayor Wright inquired how many employees are at the maximum step. Mr. Carson replied that there are 143 staff members at the maximum step.

Councilor Bowen noted that cutting all salary increases would not get the Board's budget down to a zero-percent increase. Dr. Finkelstien replied that the Board cannot choose to reduce salaries, it would have to reduce people and remarked that it would be a sad day in Newington if the Town chooses to do so. Mayor Wright stated that this is not a unique question to the Town. (Several people speak at once.) Mrs. Petronio inquired whether the Town's AFSCME zero-percent increases include step increases. Town Manager Salomone replied that although the agreement hasn't been finalized, step increases would be received. He indicated that the step structure is different from the teachers' structure and the step increases would only have a small impact of about 2/10 of a percent. Mayor Wright noted that in this economy people are losing jobs and losing their homes. He stated the AFSCME unions, the department heads and the Town Manager have all agreed to a zero-percent increase, and inquired what kind of a message it sends to the employees that teachers and administrators are going to get their increases. Mrs. DelBuono replied that in that instance perhaps the Town employees can be asked to pay fourteen-percent into their health benefits. She stated that teachers have done their share over the years (several people speak at once) and stated that she is offended by the remarks that the Board does not understand the economic times when it has presented a budget that is far below anything she has seen in her experience on the Board. She stated that the Board has worked to come up with a budget that does an adequate job for the students of the Town. Councilor Cohen noted that public participation is restricted to the item on the agenda for this particular Special Meeting and inquired when the public will next have the opportunity to comment on this issue, and how the taxpayers feel about the increase in their taxes versus what the Board is discussing as possible cuts. Mayor Wright replied that the next opportunity for general public participation is at the Council's next regular meeting on Tuesday, March 24 at 7:00 as well as at the Council's meeting to set the tentative budget on March 30, the Public Hearing on April 6 and the regular Council meeting on April 14.

Councilor Boni inquired about the average salary of a Newington teacher, and inquired about how the average compares with other districts. Mr. Carson replied that the average salary is \$56,000. Mr. Woods stated that while he doesn't have exact data the average is in line with other area districts. Mrs. Braverman indicated that CREC is looking at ways to fund textbooks throughout the region, which may present a cost savings to the Town in future years. She indicated that people come to Newington because of the schools, and indicated that the school system impacts property values. She cautioned that taxpayer's pocketbooks will be impacted far more than the \$137.00 increase this year if the school system is perceived to be declining and property values decline as well.

Mrs. Casasanta urged the Council to take a serious look at the requested three-percent increase, realize what the Board has done to get to this point, recognize that Town Manager Salomone recommended a three-percent increase, and to be open-minded to the sacrifices that will be made due to the three-percent increase but be willing to see the hard work that the Board is willing to put in to achieve all of its goals. Dr. Finkelstien remarked that both sides are exposed to these economic issues and everyone involved is volunteering their time to do what's best for Newington. Dr. Perlini thanked the Council for being open to the issues and stated that the students of the school district are the future of the community and of the world. He remarked that the Town is doing an excellent job of preparing a lot of the leaders of the future. He stated that he would hate to see the complexion of the school system change so drastically on one year in order to achieve a very low budget increase and urged the Council to carefully consider the impact that eliminating valuable programs would have on the district. Mr. Caron thanked the Council for the opportunity for the Board to present its budget and stated that there was a lot of hard work on the Board's side. He remarked that the Board is not necessarily proud of the budget but indicated that it does represent the economic realities of this community.

Councilor Nasinnyk stated that she felt comfortable with the Board's budget. She stated that it is important to move the schools forward and stated that it is important to keep the process open and transparent. Councilor Cohen remarked that her three children benefited greatly from the Newington school system and she would not like to see that taken away. Councilor Nagel stated that he has learned quite a bit from this process and remarked that he hopes that people listening understand that the Council has to consider the needs of the entire Town. He stated that quality education is very important. Councilor Boni thanked the Board for its presentation and wished Dr. Perlini the best of luck in his retirement. Councilor Bottalico thanked the Board for its presentation and stated hope that the Council will make the right decisions. Deputy Mayor Lenares thanked the Board for its hard work. Mayor Wright thanked the Board and remarked that there is a lot of passion in everyone present. He stated that it is evident that people care about the Town and about education. He stated that the Council has the fiduciary responsibility to look at everything from every angle and stated that he respects the Board's work to promote excellence in education.

V PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rose Lyons. 46 Elton Drive: Ms. Lyons stated that she is convinced, now more than ever, that budget decisions should be made by the Council, Board and the department heads. She commented that she does not have the time or inclination to continue to monitor these procedures. She stated that by making informed voting decisions every two years that elected officials will continue to do what's best to maintain Newington. Ms. Lyons remarked that she is dismayed by the lack of public participation, especially from those who have spoken out about having a say in government.. She stated that although she will not receive a raise from her employer this year she believes that a \$130 increase in her taxes is a small price to pay to maintain quality of life in Town. She stated hope that the Mayor and Republican team will continue to concentrate its efforts on reviewing the budget and will wait to pursue its meaningful change until after the budget is approved.

Maureen Klett. 104 Harold Drive: Mrs. Klett noted that she has not heard the Board call this budget a "good" budget, only a budget that works and addresses the Town's ability to pay. She indicated that the topic of bussing has come up over and over and noted that the Police Department has also utilized the busses on occasion in the past. She noted Mayor Wright's question about what the Board would do if it were to receive one-million dollars less in State funding and she replied that in that case the Board should add one-million of applied balance funds since two-million dollars is being added on the Town's side. Mrs. Klett stated that no one is denying that times are tough and stated that if the Town's bond rating is not affected by applying two-million dollars from the fund balance on the Town's side then it shouldn't be a problem to add it to the Board's side as well. Mrs. Klett noted the drastic areas of reduction that would have to occur in order to achieve a less than three-percent budget growth and urged the Council to remember that these are more than just words on paper and to remember that the Council has a responsibility to the children as well as to the taxpayer. She stated that one of the items on the list is a reduction of school nurse services and noted that there were times in the past when the school's principal has had to fill in because there was no nurse available. She also warned that more students may find themselves in need of counseling as more families fall into financial trouble.

Maddy Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive: Mrs. Kenny noted that the issue of privatizing bussing has been brought up many times over the past several years and recommended taking the money to be spent on a bussing survey and giving it to the Board of Education. She stated that to even consider a zero-percent increase budget, even as an intellectual exercise and despite the fact that other towns are voting to gut their educational systems, doesn't mean that Newington has to do so. She stated that it's time for Newington to be a leader and act as an example to others as it stands firm for education. She suggested that the Board and the Town split the difference between the 3.7% and 3.0% proposed budgets.

Clark Castelle, 167 Connecticut Avenue: Mr. Castelle stated that he is a Special Education Tutor at NHS and indicated that his income has been reduced by 75% since 2004. He noted that earlier in the day he and one of his students looked up the word "download" in the dictionary only to find that the word was not included in the dictionary, published in 1964. He stated that these are the types of dictionaries available at NHS. He stated that he moved to Newington because of the schools. He inquired how much good physical and occupational therapists can do if they are available only once per week. He stated that there is a real human element and urged the Council to make wise decisions.

VI REMARKS BY COUNCILORS (none)

VII EXECUTIVE SESSION RE: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING/LITIGATION

Councilor Bowen moved to go into Executive Session at 10:49pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Banach. Motion passed 9-0. All Councilors, Mayor Wright and Town Manager Salomone were present at Executive Session.

Councilor Bowen moved to adjourn from Executive Session at 11:15pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Bottalico. Motion passed 9-0.

VIII ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Boni moved to adjourn at 11:16pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jaime Trevethan
Clerk of the Council